



Col. William Bayles, District Engineer, awards William Wineland, Operations Division, Saylorville Lake, the District Commander's Award for July 2000.

Reflections

By Col. William Bayles, District Engineer

As we celebrate this joyous holiday season, I would like to thank each of you for your role in making 2000 another great year for the Rock Island District. Though the demands have been many and the pace of operations has been high around the District, you have carried out your incredible responsibilities with great skill and enthusiasm. During this holiday season, I hope you will take some time to reflect on the past year and consider the difference you have made to our District — and be proud of what you have done.

During the last several months, I've visited many of the sites around the District. It's been a pleasure meeting many of you and listening to your ideas and concerns. Though we don't have enough money to implement every good idea, we'll work the ones that will make us more effective in our mission, and I'll fight to get you the tools and funding you need to do your work professionally. You have many good ideas about how we can get better and you've let me know in a variety of ways. For example, in August, more than 200 of you completed an organizational climate survey from the Corps of Engineers Inspector General.

The survey results indicated we were

doing some things very well ... others not so well. Overall, our District was above average in most areas covered by the survey, and was even within Corps averages on a few. You gave high marks to both the immediate level and mid-level supervisors for allowing employees to learn from honest mistakes and for respect shown to employees. You expressed concern about unfair distributions of work and awards as well as a lack of positive changes in the workplace. The overwhelming feedback concerned communication, so I'm initially working on how to address your concerns about communication.

Communication is critical to our organization. Here are my first steps to overcome our communications challenges.


First, our short-term actions — I'm taking your comments seriously and have charged the staff to fix communications "blockages" in their areas of responsibility and to ensure we meet the letter and spirit of the performance evaluation system. Also, I'm trying to get out of the office more to listen to what people have to say, while consciously working to ensure I don't become a "blockage" too.

Next, our long-term actions — a group of us are developing a leader development

program that will focus on training supervisors in effective communications techniques and other leader skills. But this program won't achieve our desired results for some time. So what do we do in the meantime?

Back in July, I challenged supervisors to implement a philosophy called "TIPS." (Talk with people, keep them Informed, make their lives Predictable and be Sensitive to their legitimate needs.) I lay that challenge before you again—this time with a challenge to everyone to help their supervisor out by active questioning and listening. This is how we will continue to build the teams that produce good things for our fellow citizens.

Over the years, our teams have constructed, operated and maintained some of the largest and most important water-related structures and environmental projects in the United States. These are not just earth, rock and concrete structures. They are monuments to what can be accomplished as a team. They have made our country a more desirable place to live and work for our fellow citizens. It's through a complete team effort that our District will continue to be the extraordinary example it has been for the rest of the Corps. 🏠



Unsure about the bearded ho ho ho guy, this toddler advances towards her present cautiously.

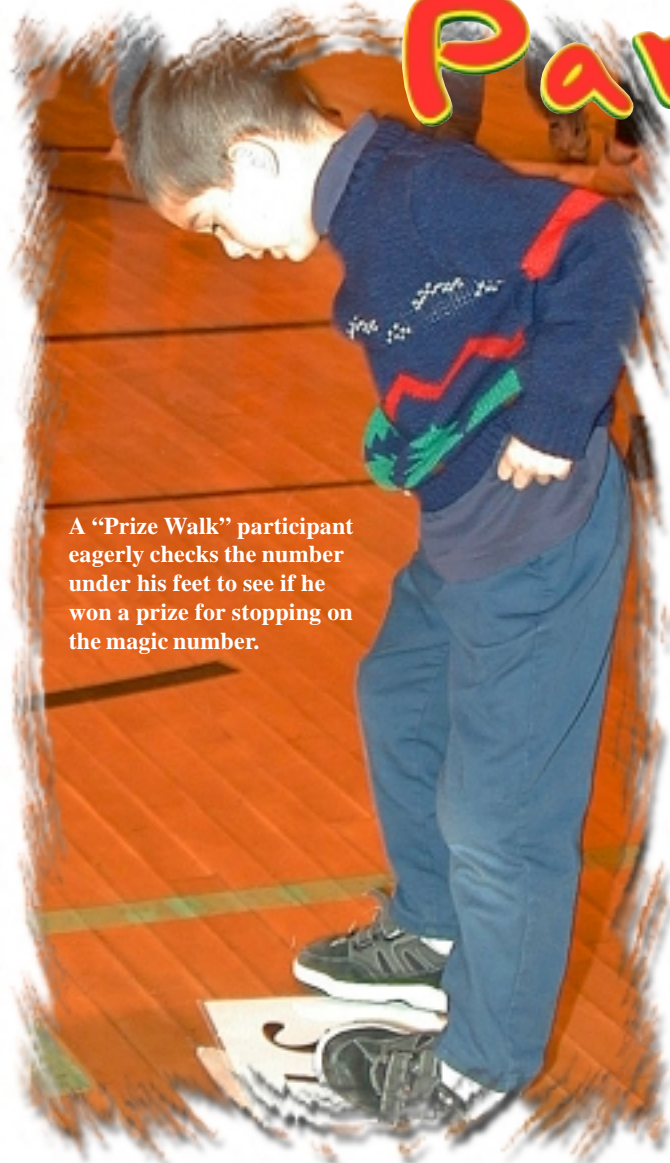
District Families Share in Holiday Spirit

Photos by Mark Kane


The Corps Family Christmas Party, held Dec. 3, and sponsored by the Rock Island District Welfare Association, presented a plethora of activities and food for District employees and their families.

Santa Claus' arrival highlighted the event, but many other activities were available including basketball, racquetball, volleyball, and swimming. Door prizes, snacks and pizza were also available.

Corps Family Christmas Party



A "Prize Walk" participant eagerly checks the number under his feet to see if he won a prize for stopping on the magic number.



One of many smiling faces that seemed to get one of the items she wanted this year.



Bored with basketball, these two toddlers decided to play their version of indoor soccer.